

1972

Speeches, Towards A Foreign Policy of Mutuality

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches

Recommended Citation

Mansfield, Mike 1903-2001, "Speeches, Towards A Foreign Policy of Mutuality" (1972). *Mike Mansfield Speeches*. 1426.
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches/1426

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Mike Mansfield Papers at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mike Mansfield Speeches by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

TOWARDS A FOREIGN POLICY OF MUTUALITY

Commencement Address by Senator Mike Mansfield (D., Montana)

Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana

FOR RELEASE Saturday, June 10, 1972, 10:00 a.m., M.D.T.

I come here today to convey a word of optimism regarding the nation's foreign relations. Optimism in this connection is long overdue; still, I hope my reference to it at this time is not premature. Whatever the case, my expectation is that history may well record 1972 as the year in which a corner was turned for peace. There are indications that the world is headed back towards constructive human purpose in its major international relationships. A water-shed appears to have been reached after a quarter century of dangerous dallying in the murky detours of the Cold War.

Insofar as the government of this nation is concerned, except in the case of Indochina, I believe the President is responding in a new fashion to international circumstances. He is projecting not as adversary but as conciliator. In so doing,

he is paying heed to the legitimate claims of a public sentiment grown impatient with the words of peace, sung to the cadence of war.

So, I address a word of hope especially to you men and women of this graduating class. Your generation can take a great deal of credit for bringing about this change. Your manifest disenchantment with the foreign policies of the past and with the tragic travesty in the name of peace in Indochina has been impressed on Washington. You have underscored the point that government is itself governed, in the final analysis, by the depth and degree of public support which can be commanded for its policies.

You have helped to inject balance into official channels and, hopefully, to assure that government will not soon again indulge in meaningless adventures abroad, largely at the expense of young life. If we are, in fact, going through the last Viet Nam, if we are, in fact, getting out at last, as I devoutly hope, you have done your share to that end.

To be sure, the millenium has not yet arrived. Doomsday missiles in the United States point at doomsday missiles several thousand miles and a few minutes away. We still have vast garrisons on the mainland of Southeast Asia. Planes are still engaged in raining terror out of the Indochina skies. Ships sow the instruments of destruction in the waters south of China. Indeed, the Secretary of Defense has just told us that the spread of conflict, by sea and air, once again into North Viet Nam--this latest episode in the continuing agony of the Indochina War, will cost the people of the nation an additional \$5 billion this year, not to speak of more lives, more prisoners-of-war, and more missing in action.

Nor should we overlook, in any note of optimism, the social and economic overload which arises at home from these and other wasting demands abroad; the capacities of the nation are great but they are not unlimited. The strain of serving, for a quarter-of-a-century as the world's leading policeman, banker, pioneer in space and what-not shows in the prices that are paid

in every store in the nation. It shows, too, in the neglect of the environment, in the decay of cities and in the rise of crime, drug addiction and other barometers of social breakdown within our society.

Before we can speak of any real light at the end of the tunnel, we must face up to the immediate problems of the transition from the exertions of war to the work of peace. That the adjustments can be difficult and painful has been brought home to us by the President's announcement that the ABM site at Malmstrom will become inoperative under the terms of the Nixon-Brezhnev treaty. In this case, as in many others, we must find--the federal government has an obligation to assist in finding--constructive alternatives.

These qualifications aside, however, the fact is that the world has come a long distance towards sanity and order in the short space of a few months. That is why, in my judgment, the class of 1972 can look with some confidence to the future.

There is a chance that the evil genies which have plagued us for a quarter century can be put back securely in the bottle.

Consider what has been achieved by the diplomacy of the past year. What comes to mind most vividly, of course, is the President's just completed journey to Moscow. The accords which were concluded there were highly significant in themselves. Yet, the most important result of the Moscow summit may be found not in specific achievements. Rather, it may emerge from the changes of national attitude on both sides which were reflected in the meetings.

The results of the Nixon-Brezhnev talks indicated a clear acceptance of mutual self-interest as the basis for the future relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States. We have not always been very prompt in the past to recognize national self-interest as a basis for a policy of peace. To be sure, we have sometimes over-assumed a national interest, as in Viet Nam and on that basis, spent the lives of tens of thousands

of Americans and permitted over \$130 billion dollars to be sucked up by the destructive sponge of that conflict. Now, after years of this deadly wastage we have at last discovered that our only valid national concern is to get back the prisoners of war and the recoverable missing in action. We have come at last to realize that our only national interest is to get out of the Indochina involvement, lock, stock and barrel.

If on some occasions we have over-assumed national interests, on others, we have ignored them almost as though they were not fitting to a great power. So, we have hesitated to define our bona fide concerns and pursued, instead, the will o'the wisp of ideological conflict. We have done so on the basis of such slogans as "Make the World Safe for Democracy," and most recently the "Battle for the Minds of Men" or the "Containment of Communism." The pursuit of ideological struggle has not led us to any victories. Rather, it has projected us into a hodge-podge of foreign aid, military alliances and into overseas propaganda and other dubious

manipulative operations. The warm human concern of Americans for other peoples has been distorted by ideological warfare and we have plunged, without warrant, into the internal political and social affairs of other nations everywhere in the world. For two decades this costly exercise has become a way of life for hundreds of thousands of Americans, some of whom have scarcely set foot in the United States for many years. If there is a new light of hope, it is in large part because this random flailing appears to be coming to an end. In place of the cacophony of the Cold War, the recent Moscow conference spoke softly of "Basic Principles of Mutual Relations between the United States and the U.S.S.R." In these principles, the two nations recognized that there is no feasible answer in a nuclear age to the prospect of mutual annihilation other than mutual collaboration.

The two powers have begun, now, to move toward what President Nixon has called a position of "mutually agreed restraint" in armaments. To that end, a treaty has been negotiated by President

Nixon to limit offensive and defensive strategic nuclear weapons on both sides. As I have already indicated, this treaty has a special meaning for Montana because it is expected that Malmstrom will not be developed now as an ABM site. In the circumstances, what I told the Senate in opposing the ABM program three years ago bears repeating today. On April 1, 1969, I said: "If this proposed ABM missile system...is right for the nation, it will be right for Montana. If it is wrong for the nation, however, the location of one site at Malmstrom cannot make it right.

"What economic benefit to a Montana community will equal the additional tax burdens and the new inflation which will weigh on all the people of Montana...? If the system becomes an insatiable maw for the consumption of public resources, who will pay for the neglect of other urgent needs, if not all the people of the nation including Montanans?"

That was my position on the ABM three years ago. It remains my position. I will support the President in regard to the Nixon-Brezhnev Treaty.

The diplomacy by which the treaty was negotiated is similar to that which led the President to take the first steps in breaking down the barriers of isolation and separation with the People's Republic of China. To digress for a moment for a personal note, let me say that on March 29, 1968, I gave the first lecture sponsored by the Mike and Maureen Mansfield Foundation at the University. The subject was "China: Retrospect and Prospect." My remarks, four years ago, contained this statement:

"It ought to be made unequivocal that we are prepared at all times to meet with Chinese representatives--formally or informally--in order to consider differences between China and the United States over Viet Nam or any other question of common concern."

The President's visit to Peking early this year which was followed by the journey of the Senate Minority Leader and myself a few weeks ago, has now made unequivocal the readiness

of this nation to meet with China to the end that difficulties may be dissolved and civil contact restored between the two peoples. Four years is a long time. It is a long delay--but it is a beginning. The Great Wall of separation has commenced to crumble and the way to a stable peace in Asia is opening at last.

What the President has done with regard to the Chinese People's Republic is to remove a self-imposed straight-jacket on the foreign policies of the nation. Following World War II, for example, rather than face the great upheaval which had taken place in China, we chose not to recognize but to quarantine it. We cut ourselves off from contact with these monumental changes, thinking all the while that by so doing we somehow could exercise political control over them. In retrospect, it is clear that we had little or no effect over the course of events.

The fact is that there was a viable and independent government in control in China for many years before we chose to acknowledge that such was the case. It availed us nothing

to ignore and isolate ourselves from that government. Yet, we continued to do so long after this policy had lost the last shred of a rationale.

Now that myths have begun to be replaced by realities, we can proceed to explore with the People's Republic of China, as the President has started to do with the Soviet Union, the possibilities of mutual accommodation. The change comes very late. Already, as I have indicated, the economy of the nation reveals the stresses imposed by unrealistic and excessively costly foreign-defense policies. Last year, for example, it was necessary to devalue the dollar, to raise import duties and to impose domestic controls to prevent a catastrophic breakdown in the nation's financial grid. The process of adjustment had been delayed too long to make a graceful and painless transition and it will be prudent to anticipate still other shocks in the future.

Nevertheless, we are now moving in the direction of mutuality, of a sharing of responsibilities and leadership with

other nations. In part, this process depends on negotiations. In part, however, it is possible to take unilateral actions. It is not always necessary to await the pleasure of others in order to lighten our self-imposed burdens. I have, for example, not hesitated to urge unilateral action at various times with regard to Viet Nam in an effort to bring the involvement to a more rapid conclusion. I have done so because the ending of this mistaken adventure is our problem and our problem alone. Every day that the involvement persists adds to the burdens of the people of this nation, to the list of dead and wounded and to the devastation of the hapless people of Indochina. Others may have an interest in our withdrawal from this conflict. But none has a more vital interest than this nation in getting out without delay.

I have also urged unilateral action to bring about a substantial reduction of U. S. forces in Europe. There is no rhyme or reason, in my judgment, to keep more than half-million U. S. military personnel and dependents in Western Europe a quarter

of a century after World War II at the expense of the people of the United States. Whatever purposes of foreign policy the U. S. garrison in Europe may still serve, the same purposes can be met by a far smaller contingent. As it is now, this enormous deployment is a drain on U. S. revenues; it is fuel for inflation in the United States and it is a major source of the weakness of the dollar in relation to the currencies of other nations.

I have stressed this issue time and again against the resistance of the Executive Branch under the Administrations of three Presidents. Insofar as I am concerned, it will continue to be stressed, notwithstanding the Moscow agreements which call for negotiation of mutual and balanced reductions of forces in Europe. The fact is that the Soviet Union does not pay for this antiquated and largely irrelevant U. S. deployment. The Europeans do not pay for it. The people of this nation pay the cost in their taxes. I see no particular virtue in prolonged negotiations with the Russians to bring about a reduction of U. S. forces which

should have been done years ago in our own interest. I am appalled to think of the billions which have already been wasted in this long waiting game.

There was a time within the clear remembrance of many of us here today, when the rhetoric of Cold War was part and parcel of policy. That was a time when there did not appear to be any mutuality of interests between East and West and when it would have been futile to urge unilateral steps to reduce tensions. Those were the days when each nation was what George Washington so correctly described as the "slave of its own animosity."

The essential fact in precipitating the Cold War was that two powerful new forces--ideology and technology--came together at the close of World War II. This fusion vastly complicated the whole interplay of international affairs. The technological problem was awesome in its simplicity. With the great flood of scientific and engineering advances, governments came into possession of the power of instant and worldwide destruction. In consequence, the processes of statecraft were compressed in time and altered radically in conduct.

In this country there was a Constitutional fall-out from these technological developments. The power of the Executive Branch in foreign affairs increased drastically even as the power of legislatures shrank in proportion. In crises, so it was reasoned, there would not be time to make political decisions, much less debate the issues. At the same time, the new technology of war, by its scope and complexity, became more than ever a partner of government, with a vested interest in its own perpetuity and a high potential for distorting public decisions about war and peace.

The other aspect of the Cold War--the ideological problem--arose from the fact that two of the victors in World War II--the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China--were revolutionary states committed to a system of social and economic organization which was anathema to this nation. The conspiratorial aspect of Communism posed a particularly painful problem for the United States, breeding suspicion, distrust and division in government.

It became difficult to separate valid threats to national security from the bombast of the power-seekers. Enlightened public debate became constrained and as a result public policy was not always subjected as fully as it should have been to the purgative of critical challenge. So the political paroxysms of the '50's led to the rigid policies of the '60's.

History may well record that we pursued the correct foreign policies into the early 1960's; that we bought time, through containment and counterforce, to permit the gradual moderation of Communist power, thereby reducing the Marxist states to the political dimensions of other nations. However that may be, it has been apparent for some time that we persisted in these policies too long. We were blind to changes elsewhere and to the possibilities of adjusting to mutual interest. In the end, we came to the disaster of Viet Nam. It is part of the price which has been exacted for the obstinate pursuit of the obsolete in foreign policy.

How can it be prevented from happening again? Quite possibly the world will not soon see a repetition of the particular confluence of historical forces--ideology and technology--which produced the rigidities of the Cold War. Possibly, the awareness of our own electorate may now be such that prolonged periods of national self-delusion will no longer be countenanced. Perhaps, more effective techniques will be found in the art of government which will act to limber the dead weight of massive bureaucracy and so bring about a greater responsiveness to changing circumstances both at home and abroad. Perhaps, the addition of the under-21-voters to the electorate will revitalize the entire political process. In any event, it is doubtful that your generation--seared as it has been by the folly and outrage of Viet Nam--will long suffer in silence a foreign policy which is based on the outdated.

In the final analysis it comes down to the degree to which an enlightened and vigorous electorate will probe and test and call to account the policies of its own government. President Brewster of Yale has put it in these words:

"Exposure, questioning, reappraisal are often painful, even agonizing; their price is nothing, however, compared to the resentment aroused by a feeling of manipulated ignorance."

Your generation has some reason to feel, I'm sure, that it has paid the high price of "manipulated ignorance." At least you have the advantage of knowing clearly what your generation must avoid. I am confident that you can and will not only skirt the pitfalls of the past, but being thus spared the old burdens, you will be free to explore the vast possibilities of mutual accommodation with all peoples in a world which is now beginning to be liberated from its obsolete fears.

You can do no more. You should do no less.